

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MARKEY CALLS FOR HEARING ON ROLLER COASTER SAFETY

**Lawmaker targets special exemption from safety oversight –
“Close the Roller Coaster Loophole”**

Washington, DC: Rep. Ed Markey, chief sponsor of a bill to improve safety on amusement park rides, criticized the amusement park industry for its “Alice in Wonderland” view of its own safety record. At a press conference, where he was joined by Ann Brown, Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Markey released a comparison of the fatality rate on roller coasters relative to more mundane forms of transportation, including passenger cars, trains, buses and passenger planes. The analysis of 1997 data found that the fatality rate on coasters was not as bad as in passenger automobiles, but worse than for planes, buses and trains.

“The industry likes to think it is safe than any comparable activity,” Markey noted, “but the truth is that it is not in some special category and does not deserve its current exemption for CPSC safety oversight. It is time to close the roller coaster loophole.”

Other participants appearing in support of Markey’s effort were Ms. Kathy Fackler (mother of a boy whose foot was mangled by a coaster), Mr. Ken Martin (amusement ride inspector from Virginia), Mary Ellen Fise (Consumer Federation of America), Sally Greenberg (Consumers Union) and Rachel Weintraub (U.S. Public Interest Research Group.)

Markey bill, H.R. 3032, the Amusement Park Ride Safety Act, has 20 cosponsors including both Republicans and Democrats. It was introduced last fall after the most calamitous week in the history of roller coasters, where 4 people dies in accidents on coasters at three separate parks.

“When a child dies in a train or plane crash,” Markey said, “federal safety experts fly to the scene, reconstruct the accident, share the information in all 50 states, and order repairs. But when an 8-year-old dies on a roller coaster, the CPSC’s hands are tied and no one in the federal government is empowered to investigate or share what is learned nationwide. As a result, accidents are occurring and people are getting injured unnecessarily. That’s wrong. The law must be changed.”

Markey is seeking hearing before the House Commerce Committee’s Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade and Consumer Protection. Markey is the highest-ranking Democrat on that subcommittee.

“I have talked with the Chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. Tauzin, and he says he is committed to holding hearings consistent with the schedule. I am optimistic that time can be found to hold a hearing before families and children fall into the regulatory black hole of roller coaster ride safety.”

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